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ANCIENT CHINESE FIGURED SILKS

EXCAVATED BY SIR AUREL STEIN AT
RUINED SITES OF CENTRAL ASIA

DRAWN AND DESCRIBED BY

F. H. ANDREWS

PRINCIPAL, AMAR SINGH TECHNICAL INSTITUTE, SRINAGAR

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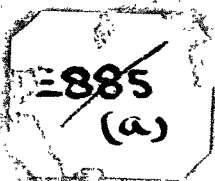
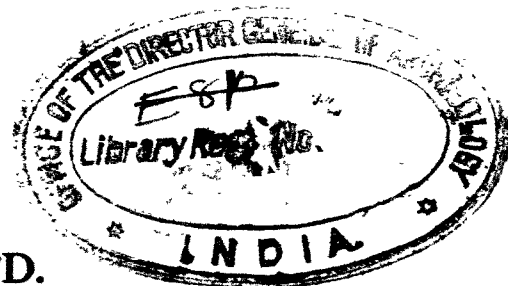




FIG. 2. FRAGMENT OF POLYCHROME FIGURED SILK, HAN PERIOD: PROCESSION OF BEASTS



Crimson Br. Yellow-Br. Lt. Buff. Dk. Buff. Blue.

SPECIMENS OF CLOUD SCROLLS FROM HAN TOMB SCULPTURES



FIG. 2A



FIG. 2B



FIG. 2C

ANCIENT CHINESE FIGURED SILKS EXCAVATED BY SIR AUREL STEIN DRAWN AND DESCRIBED BY F. H. ANDREWS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE
BY SIR AUREL STEIN
INDIAN ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY.

THE figured silks discussed by Mr. Fred. H. Andrews in the following paper are specimens from a collection of ancient Chinese fabrics which were brought to light in the course of my third Central-Asian expedition (1913-16) from a cemetery site of what was once Lou-lan territory and is now part of the Lop desert in the easternmost depression of the Tārim Basin, in Chinese Turkestan. The fabrics owe their special interest, artistic and historical at the same time, to the fact that they represent the oldest surviving examples so far known of Chinese silk industry and textile art, both proved by abundant literary evidence to reach back to the earliest epochs of China's civilisation.

The very important part which the export trade of silk fabrics from China to the classical West has played in first opening up relations of the Chinese Empire direct with Central Asia, and through the latter with the Near East, has long been known from Chinese historical records as well as from notices in classical literature.¹ The Annals of the First Han dynasty and Ssu-ma Ch'ien's great contemporary historical work make it clear beyond all doubt that it was the need of assuring an open passage westwards for the trade in silk textiles, during long centuries China's great monopoly, which first led the great Han Emperor Wu-ti, in the last quarter of the 2nd century before Christ, to seek the expansion of Chinese political and military control into Central Asia along the great caravan route leading through the Tārim Basin. It is equally certain that this great silk trade was carried on in finished textiles, those 'Seric garments' to which the classical designations of the Chinese and their country (*Seres*, *Serike*) as well as our modern names of 'silk', etc., owe their origin.²

That these extensive exports of Chinese silks comprised decorated fabrics for which Chinese textile art has been famous through all periods would be obvious even if we did not possess for it direct testimony in classical texts. The de-

signs conveyed by them, the most portable and most popular products of Chinese artistic skill, are not likely to have remained without some influence on the development of decorative styles in Irān and the Near East, the countries known to have been mainly concerned in the distribution and adaptation of these imports. The thought of this influence must have suggested itself to more than one competent student of ancient textile art as represented in the remains of late Hellenistic, 'Coptic' and 'Sassanian' figured silks. But no one, probably, recognized this more clearly than Professor J. Strzygowski who in 1903, when dealing in a masterly article with textile finds from Egyptian graves of the late Hellenistic and Christian periods, was led by quasi-intuitive perception, based on exceptionally wide art knowledge, to look for distinct traces of this Far-Eastern art influence in certain features of their decorative motifs.³

But in the absence of such definite links as early examples of ancient Chinese textile art might alone supply, such investigations could scarcely emerge from the sphere of conjecture. It is true that among the treasures of the Shosoin Collection, that great Japanese depository of the old arts and industries of the Far East, fine decorated silk fabrics of Chinese origin are preserved. But, as far as they have become known, these belong to the T'ang period, contemporary with the formation of that collection. From the T'ang period, too, date most of those fine fragments of Chinese figured silks which in 1907 I had the good fortune to recover from the walled-up chapel at the 'Caves of the Thousand Buddhas' of Tun-huang, on the westernmost confines of China.⁴ Full descriptions and illustrations of them will, I hope, soon be rendered accessible to research by the publication of *Serindia*, the detailed account of the results of my second Central-Asian journey, now passing through the Oxford University Press. The same chronological observation applies also to the relatively scanty materials in the line of decorated textiles that previous excavations of ruined sites of Chinese Turkestan had yielded.

The textile remains that I discovered in 1914, at a cemetery site of ancient Lou-lan allow us to trace the art of the Chinese textile designer and

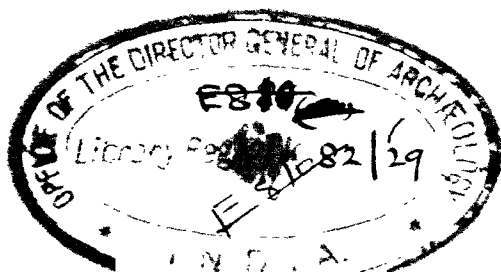
¹ For a useful bibliography of the principal modern publications dealing with the history of this silk trade, cf. Herrmann, *Die alten Seidenstrassen zwischen China und Syrien*, 1910, i. pp. 1 sq. note.

² The passages in classical texts referring to "Seric" fabrics have been critically edited and translated in M. Coedes' valuable book: *Textes d'auteurs grecs et latins relatifs à l'Extrême Orient*, 1910; see Index, p. 180.

³ See Strzygowski, *Seidenstoffe aus Ägypten*, im *Kaiser Friedrich-Museum, Berlin*, with the pregnant sub-title: *Wechselwirkung zwischen China, Persien und Syrien* (Jahrbuch der Kön. Preuss. Kunstsammlungen, 1903, xxiv, pp. 147-178); cf. particularly pp. 173 sqq.

⁴ Cf. my *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 207 sqq.

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weaver long centuries further back, to the very beginning of the period when the export of its products to Central Asia and the distant West was first fully developed. Of the artistic merit of many among those finds the careful drawings of characteristic specimens from Mr. Andrews' hand will furnish adequate evidence, while his full descriptive notes will help to throw light on varied points of interest connected with their designs and technique. But in order to realize fully the bearing of these finds on the history of Chinese textile art and on the question of the influence its products may have exercised in the West, it is necessary to consider what the archaeological circumstances connected with their discovery prove as to their date and origin. The fact alone that these relics have been preserved for us on that very route which the Chinese first opened through the Lop desert for their silk trade to the distant West, is bound to invest those circumstances with additional importance.

In the Personal Narrative of my second Central-Asian expedition,^{4a} I have given a description of that desolate waste of wind-eroded clay desert to the north of Lop-nor where in December, 1906, I explored the remains of the Lou-lan site first discovered by Dr. Hedin six years earlier. The abundant Chinese and other records on wood and paper which my systematic excavations at the principal ruins then brought to light had made it quite certain that the ruins were those of an ancient fortified station occupied by the Chinese within the territory of Lou-lan. Through this passed the earliest route into the Tārīm Basin, opened by them in the closing decade of the 2nd century B.C. The Chinese records found there belong mostly to the middle of the 3rd century A.D.⁵ From their evidence and other multifarious antiquarian indications which will be found fully discussed in Chap. XI of my *Serindia*, it can be concluded with certainty that the Chinese station of Lou-lan and such scanty cultivation as had been maintained near it were finally abandoned to the desert in the early part of the 4th century A.D.

The route leading to it from the oasis of Tun-huang, on the westernmost border of the Chinese province of Kansu, had always been beset with very serious difficulties owing to the forbidding waterless wastes, salt-encrusted, of the ancient Lop Sea bed which had to be crossed east of Lou-lan.^{5a} After the abandonment of the Lou-lan

station and of the canals which had brought water to it, the old route became wholly impracticable for traffic. Our surveys of 1914 have proved that for over 110 miles no drinkable water could ever have been obtainable along the line of the ancient route beyond the easternmost outpost of Lou-lan territory. The Lou-lan station itself is now separated westwards by over 120 miles of absolutely waterless desert, mostly drift sand, from the nearest point on the Konche-daryā, the river which once sent water to it. Thus archaeological and geographical facts combine to fix the beginning of the 4th century A.D. as the chronological *terminus ad quem* for any remains of permanent occupation found within the Lou-lan area.

But it must be borne in mind that the main current of traffic had been already diverted from this difficult desert route more than two centuries earlier. It had been originally chosen for its shortness—the line it follows is the most direct between Tun-huang and the great oases along the northern rim of the Tārīm Basin—; but probably even more on account of the security which its line, protected on the north by the barren wastes of the Kuruk-tāgh ranges, offered against Hun raids, ever the chief danger to early Chinese dominion in Central Asia. This danger, as we know from the Chinese Annals, receded in the second half of the 1st century A.D. After the occupation of the Hāmi oasis in 73 A.D. there became available for Chinese trade to Central Asia and the West a new "Northern Route", longer but far easier in every respect.⁶ It led from the vicinity of Tun-huang across the stony Pei-shan north-westwards to the foot of the T'ien-shan range, altogether avoiding the formidable Lop desert, and this route has ever since remained the main line of communication from China to Central Asia.

After this rapid survey of the historical and topographical facts which determine the chronological limits of any antiquities of Chinese origin from the Lou-lan region, I turn to the locality and conditions in which those relics of Chinese textile art were actually discovered. A chief object of the explorations which in the winter of 1914 brought me back to the waterless wind-swept desert of Lop was the search for the ancient route which Chinese trade caravans and military expeditions of Han times had followed on their way to Lou-lan.⁷ This search, carried on under extremely trying climatic conditions, proved successful beyond expectation. It led

^{4a} See *Ruins of Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 377 sqq.

⁵ These records, many of them exactly dated, have been published and fully elucidated by M. Chavannes, the lamented great Sinologue; see his *Documents Chinois découverts par Aurel Stein*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1913, pp. iv, 153-168.

^{5a} For a sketch map showing the ground crossed by the ancient route through the Lop Desert, as surveyed in 1914, see my *Explorations in the Lop Desert*, *Geographical Review*, New York, 1920, ix. p. 3.

⁶ Cf. *Serindia*, Chap. xxviii. sec. i.

⁷ A preliminary account of these explorations has been given in my paper, *A third journey of exploration in Central Asia*, 1913-16 (*Geographical Journal*, 1916, xlviii, pp. 121, sqq.). See also my "Explorations in the Lop Desert", in *Geographical Review*, New York, 1920, ix. pp. 1-33, with illustrations.

first to the discovery of an ancient Chinese *castrum*, dating undoubtedly from the first opening of the route about 110 B.C. and intended to form a *point d'appui* where the route, after crossing the salt-encrusted wastes of the dried-up Lop Sea bed, first struck the once habitable ground of Lou-lan. The line of the ancient route connecting this *castrum* with the ruined station of Lou-lan could thus be fixed with certainty.

Proceeding from this station for about three miles north-eastwards we came upon a conspicuous clay terrace, or 'Mesa', rising steeply some 35 feet above the level of the bare wind-eroded plain. Its sides showed remains of graves partially exposed and destroyed by wind-erosion cutting away the banks. Here only bones and small objects in metal or other hard materials had survived. But the top of the Mesa, about 30 feet across in the middle, had escaped erosion, and here we found a series of grave pits intact, measuring up to 7 by 10 feet each and about 6 feet deep.

Here rapid but systematic clearing yielded a rich antiquarian haul in quite bewildering confusion. Mixed up with detached human bones and fragments of wooden coffins there emerged in abundance objects of personal use, such as decorated bronze mirrors, etc., deposited with the dead; wooden eating trays, jugs, etc., used for sepulchral food offerings; models of arms; Chinese records on wood and paper, and above all a wonderful variety of fabrics which even in their ragged dirt-encrusted condition delighted my eye. Among them were beautifully woven and coloured silks; torn pieces of polychrome figured fabrics, damask, tapestry and embroidery work, all in silk; fragments of fine pile carpets, by the side of plentiful coarse materials in wool and felt.

It was evident from the way in which rags of various fabrics were often found stuck to the same bones that these were remnants of garments, already old and much worn, which had been used for tightly wrapping up bodies. This custom of bandaging corpses in closely wound rags of old clothing, no longer serviceable to the living, was demonstrated quite clearly by plentiful examples of complete Chinese burials that I found a year later in the clay-cut tombs of Tur-fān. These belong to the early T'ang period, and are thus centuries later than the Han remains here discussed. But all observations showed that Chinese burial customs had during this interval not changed in essentials.

As the clearing of the remains on that Mesa, "site-marked" by me as L.C., proceeded, I soon realized, from a variety of indications which my Detailed Report now in preparation will record, that the contents of these pits must have been collected, previous to the abandonment of the

Chinese station of Lou-lan, from older graves which wind-erosion had exposed or was threatening. There is evidence elsewhere that care had been originally taken to place graves on ground safe from moisture by irrigation or inundation.

But this necessarily meant leaving them exposed in time to wind-erosion; for the destructive forces of ceaseless deflation and corrosion of wind-driven sand must have been already at work here in ancient times on all ground not protected by vegetation or, what under the climatic conditions of the whole Tārīm Basin means the same, moisture. On ground where, as my archaeological observations conclusively prove, the surface level is lowered by wind-erosion by more than a foot per century,⁸ the contents of originally shallow graves, dating say from the 1st century B.C., were bound to be in danger of destruction by the 3rd century A.D. It is from such earlier cemeteries that the mixed remains in the grave pits of L.C. must have been gathered, in obedience to a pious custom still widely prevalent among the Chinese to this day.

This observation is of special importance for us here; for it obviously shifts back the date of the textile relics recovered from L.C. to a period considerably earlier than the *terminus ad quem* above fixed for the abandonment of Lou-lan. When the reburial of the cemetery remains at L.C. actually took place I am not at present able to indicate, as the detailed examination of all materials is not yet completed. But it cannot be put appreciably later than the middle of the 3rd century A.D. As regards the upper chronological limit it is certain that the 1st century B.C. was the period when trade and traffic along the Lou-lan route flourished most.⁹ And on the general grounds above indicated it appears to me safe to ascribe a great portion, if not most, of the textile relics from the grave pits of Mesa L.C. to this period.

Fortunately we have definite and independent archaeological evidence to support this view. It is furnished by two fragments of polychrome figured silks which I excavated in 1907 at ruined watch-stations of the ancient Chinese frontier wall in the desert of Tun-huang, far away to the east. This *Limes*, which the ancient route to Lou-lan skirted for a considerable distance, had been constructed during the closing decade of the 2nd century B.C., and when explor-

⁸ Cf. *Desert Cathay*, i. pp. 377 sqq., 388, 404, etc.; for illustrations of the effects of wind-erosion, *ibid.* Figs. 113-115, 121.

⁹ Internal troubles of China, due to the usurpation of Wang Mang (9-22 A.D.), and renewed aggression of the Huns caused Chinese intercourse with, and political control in, Central Asia to be interrupted until the third quarter of the 1st century A.D.; cf. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao*, 1907, pp. 155 sq. It may also be mentioned that in the year 2 A.D. a new route diverging to the N.W. from the Tun-huang Limes and avoiding the Lop Desert came into use; cf. Chavannes, *T'oung-pao*, 1905, pp. 533 sq.

ing its remains and the refuse heaps left behind by the detachments which had once garrisoned it, I recovered ancient Chinese records on wood, often dated, as well as other relics in abundance.¹⁰ Now the two fragments of figured silk fabrics which will be discussed by Mr. Andrews below (Nos. 9, 10) were found in refuse heaps which by the evidence of exactly dated records must be assigned to the 1st century B.C. The decorative style of these fragments shows the closest agreement with that of a number among our figured silks from L.C. and thus distinctly confirms the early date assumed for the latter.

.. ..

When those finds of textile relics of Han times first emerged in the utter desolation of the wind-eroded Lop Desert, there was no time for more than rapid glimpses at the wealth of beautiful designs and rich colours which they spread out as a feast for my eyes. Yet I felt then encouraged to hope that they would help to lift the veil from a new and fascinating chapter in the history of textile art. Since my collection of antiquities was brought to India in 1916 the examination of those relics has been entrusted to the experienced eyes and hands of my artist friend Mr. Fred. H. Andrews, Principal, Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar, Kashmir, whose collaboration has been of the utmost help to me in the study and publication of all my previous Central-Asian finds. His analysis of the specimens now reproduced will show that there was good reason for the hope I had felt at the time of discovery. But we both realize fully that much remains yet to be done before that chapter in the history of textile art which opened when the products of the silk-weaving Seres first began to find their way westwards by that ancient desert route can be read in full clearness.

SPECIMENS OF HAN TEXTILES ILLUSTRATED AND DESCRIBED BY F. H. ANDREWS

The importance of the figured tissues recovered by Sir Aurel Stein, in the course of his explorations of 1913-15, from ancient graves of the Lou-lan tract cannot be over-estimated, more particularly in the light they throw upon the history of decorative design and the growth of pattern.

The first impression of a casual examination of the specimens was the absence of general resemblance to anything in textiles with which we are familiar. Investigations of the details awakened recollections of kindred forms used in

various materials, and first of all those of the tomb sculptures of the Han period in the Province of Shan-tung. The method of weaving, too, seemed unfamiliar, and on close investigation and comparison with later textiles it seemed that this point might prove of antiquarian value. The following notes on a few selected pieces will be sufficient to indicate the extent of the interest attaching to these very fascinating and wonderfully preserved documents of a distinctly Chinese art.^{10a}

Fig. 1. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk; horseman and grotesque beasts.* The pattern is cut off abruptly on the r. by the selvedge, which intersects the cloud scroll. To r. is a horned beast, rampant and regardant with open jaws and protruding tongue. To l. a horseman rides towards the beast on a high-stepping mount with stiff upstanding mane and a horn-like projection rising from the top of its head. The rider, who sits well down in the saddle, wears a soft cap extending downwards at the back in a curved line as far as the shoulders; a saddle cloth appears from behind his leg.

Behind the horseman, and advancing in the same direction but on a lower level, is a winged beast with jaws open, a pair of forward projecting horns on its head, and a long drooping tail. On the flank of this creature are two roundels, and a third decorates its breast. Following, but on the same level as the horseman, is a similar monster in rampant pose, with a single horn directed backwards. To l. of this is a leopard-like creature on the lower level, rampant and regardant, with tail turned up over its back. From this point the pattern repeats.

A very free cloud scroll meanders under and over the beasts and is of a type which I propose to call 'tree-coral', as suggesting the branched and noded manner of its growth. It is banded or

^{10a} The illustrations intended to show here the designs of these pieces have been prepared from black and white drawings which I made to scale from the originals.

Recourse to this procedure was found necessary on several grounds. Ordinary photographic reproduction, which alone is available at Srinagar, the present temporary place of deposit of this portion of Sir Aurel Stein's third collection, would, owing to technical reasons, often fail to bring out details of the designs with their delicately shaded colours, especially where these have faded or otherwise suffered. In some instances, owing to the torn condition of the fabrics, the complete pattern can be obtained only by studying several pieces of the identical material. In the case of damasks, any form of direct reproduction would be useless, for it is only by examination in various lights and at different angles that it is possible to make out the pattern.

Photographic reproduction by the Three-Colour or some similar process could alone do justice to the richness of colours and perfection of textile technique in many of these fabrics. It is hoped that means will be found to use such reproduction for selected pieces in a final publication. Meanwhile the drawings prepared by me with the utmost care for fidelity may suffice for the purpose of the present preliminary account. Wherever I have extended the pattern beyond the limits of the actual specimens the extension is clearly marked by a different treatment.

¹⁰ Cf. *Desert Cathay*, ii. pp. 50 sqq., 92-156; also Chavannes, *Documents chinois découverts par Aurel Stein*, pp. v. sqq.; Stein, *Serindia*, pp. 591-790.



FIG. 1. FRAGMENT OF POLYCHROME FIGURED SILK, HAN PERIOD; HORSEMAN AND GROTESQUE BEASTS

veined with a centre line and on either side has a different colour. The outline is either light or dark to contrast with the colour on which it is used. In the upper side of the hollows below the hind feet of the first animal the outline is thickened to give the effect of a lining over which the terminal nodes turn.

This effect and the general character of the whole cloud suggest a plastic origin. Below the horseman in a curiously rococo detail. Chinese lapidary characters occur near the first beast.

In the small outline sketch (1a) of a detail from the stone bas-reliefs of one of the Han tombs (early 2nd century A.D.) at Shan-tung,¹¹ one sees a striking resemblance to the general design and pose of the horseman in the textile. In both are the same vigorous action of the horse, the lift of the head, the saddle cloth, and the close seat of the rider. The banding or veining of the scroll is also characteristic of the clouds and tree stems in the Han tomb sculptures.

In the general scheme of design the animals are placed in zig-zag order, so as to avoid the formation of obvious straight lines in the pattern and facilitate the meander of the cloud. The straight lines which are formed by the diagonal rows of beasts are just those favoured by the Chinese designers of this period in their geometrical all-over patterns; but they are here satisfactorily neutralized by the strength of the meander cutting across them.

Colour. Ground: dark blue (?) now discoloured to very dark myrtle green. Pattern: cloud, dark buff banded with crimson-brown and bright green outlined with light buff and crimson-brown; animals, dark buff marked with the other brown; animals, dark buff marked with the other colours and outlined with light buff and crimson-brown; Chinese characters, light buff.

Weave. Warp rib, firmly and evenly woven.

Fig. 2. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk; procession of beasts.* The pattern extends the full width of the material and is complete at both ends. To r. a long-necked winged tiger with upraised head and open jaws advances stealthily to the l. In front is a cat-like creature with long looped tail and a pair of short horns with hook ends. The jaws are dog-like, slightly open, showing teeth and carrying a jewelled wreath. The body is mottled and has a single roundel on the quarter.

Facing this second animal is a long-bodied lizard-like beast with long looped tail and rather confused jaws. Its body, which is mottled and marked with one roundel near the flank, is turned in a half circle as it regards the wreath-carrying creature. To l. a long-necked leopard-bodied animal, with short dragon head and a pair of

short horns, is facing to l. and perched on a group of nodes, one hind leg just being drawn up to find a footing.

The long neck is strained downwards, bringing the head below the level of the feet. It seems to threaten a cat-bodied, goat-headed creature in front, which in the act of running, as down a slope, turns to regard its enemy. Both these beasts are mottled and marked with roundels on the flank. The last beast is a winged dragon with long jaws, heavy snout, and long horns. Between the first and second animals is a standing duck or goose, at right angles to the line of animals; and between the fifth and last animals is another goose, regardant, also at right angles.

The cloud is very free in its scrolls, and consists generally of combinations of the S form, but the C form is also used. It is of approximately even thickness, excepting where nodes occur, and is without veins. To distinguish it from the tree-coral type, I propose to describe it as 'vermicular'.

Its nodes are usually in the form of closely coiled spirals; but at times they are uncurled, as under the right hind foot of the second animal. The scroll arching over the head of the goat terminates in a form probably intended to suggest an animal's head. Scrolled or voluted nodes are characteristic of the clouds in the Han tomb sculptures, and the terminations are frequently in the form of heads of human figures.¹²

Near the centre of the pattern is a feature repeated three times, composed of four curved ("drifting") points or prongs proceeding from a group of three volutes which are attached to the cloud scroll by a single stalk. It is not clear what this is intended for. Figure 2a, from the Han tombs, has an example of the quadruple volute developing a single point and of the triple volute without point. The prongs may perhaps be a development of the single point.

The beasts in this design are practically on one level and form a line across the material. The second creature, carrying a jewel in its mouth, recalls the birds carrying jewelled bands in the example found by Professor Grünwedel at Kizil,¹³ and the eagle on the shroud of St. Germain.¹⁴ Near each beast are Chinese lapidary characters.

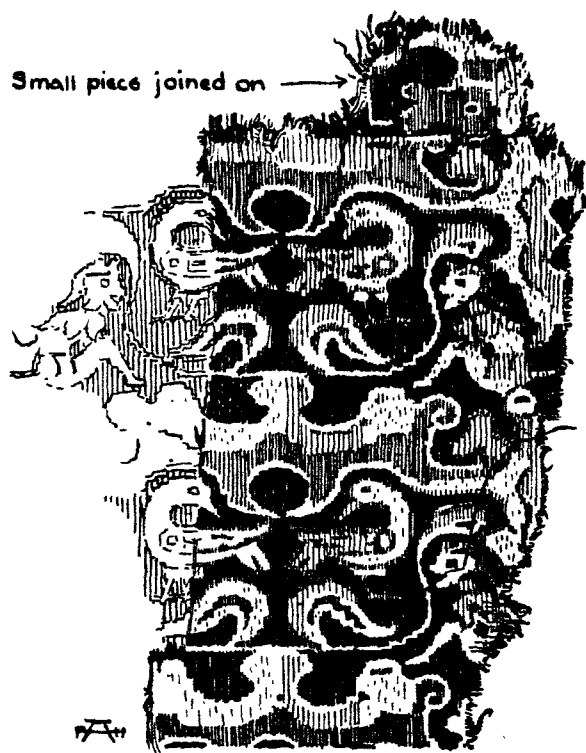
Colour. Ground: crimson-brown. Pattern: yellow-brown, two tones of buff and blue; scrolls, outlined buff, but in parts without outline; animals partly outlined in buff, yellow-brown, and blue, according to contrast; one bird not outlined and the other with blue contour to back; drifting prongs not outlined; Chinese

¹¹ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique en Chine Septentrionale*, I. Pl. XXVI, No. 47.

¹² Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I. Pl. LXIX, No. 133.

¹³ Cf. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, i. Fig. 100

¹⁴ Cf. Migeon, *Les arts du tissu*, p. 29.



FRAGMENTS OF POLYCHROME FIGURED SILKS, HAN PERIOD

FIG. 3. WINGED GOAT AMONG CLOUDS

FIG. 4. SPRITE WITH BIRD IN CLOUDS



 Dk. Blue . Crim. Br. Lt. Buff. Dk. Buff. Green.

FIG. 4

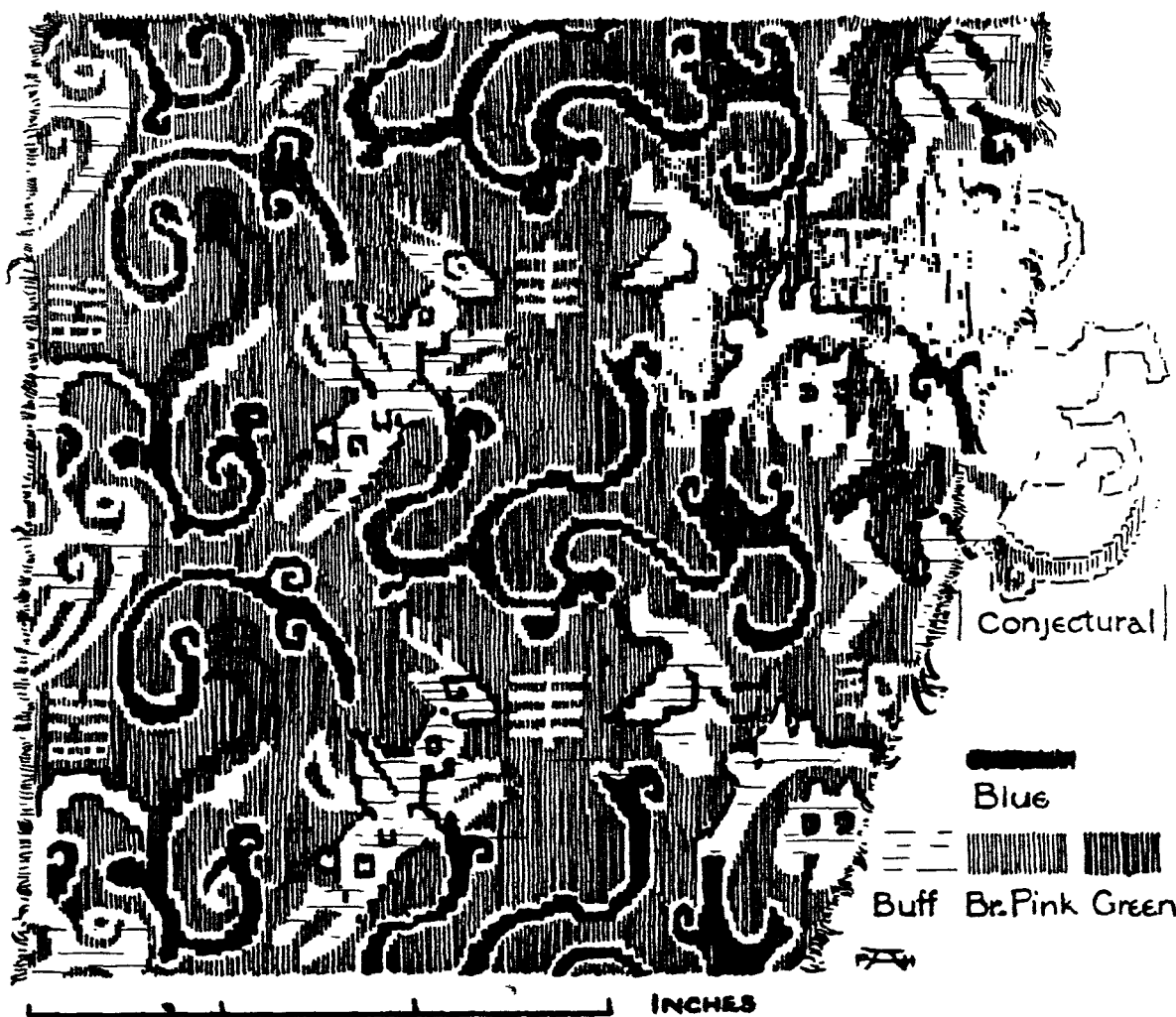


FIG 3

characters, buff. The absence of outline causes the pattern in some places to sink into the ground. The same peculiarity is found in 16th century Persian carpets.

Weave. Warp rib, well woven. The following colours are in bands in the given order: Blue, yellow-brown, and dark buff. The selvedge has outside a narrow band of blue, next crimson-brown, then a vandyke of buff and yellow-brown.

Fig. 3. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk; winged goat among clouds.* To r. is a winged tiger-like animal in the pose of leaping down or walking down a steep incline, the hind part of the body being thrown upwards. Although the head is in profile, both eyes and both ears are shown. A collar encircles the neck and two bands are round the body. Facing this and on a slightly higher level is a goat or deer with rather large wings and branched horns, leaping or flying upwards. Between the two animals is a standing duck placed at right angles to the rest of the design. To l. is a portion of the 'drifting prongs' feature. The cloud is of the vermicular type and not very graceful.

A Chinese lapidary character appears below the forefeet of the first animal, a second near the nose of the goat, and a third near the prongs.

The collar worn by the first beast recalls a similar feature in Western and Near Eastern textiles of all periods from those of Antinoë of the 6th century onwards. An example of the body-band occurs on a pair of lions in one of the Antinoë examples¹⁵ and in a Coptic stone frieze in the Cairo Museum.¹⁶

Colour. Ground: copper. Pattern: scrolls, bright blue outlined buff, and small portions buff, outlined blue; animals and birds, buff with patches of yellow-green, partially outlined blue; drifting prongs dark buff, not outlined; Chinese characters pale buff.

Weave. Warp rib, loosely woven. Green in recurring bands.

Fig. 4. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk; sprite with bird in clouds.* To r. a sprite with Puck-like face, seated in profile to l. on the node of a cloud. His cap resembles that of the horseman in Fig. 1, and on his shoulders is a short cape in the form of the calyx of a flower. He seems to wear a kilt of the same form. His arms are not traceable. To l., slightly higher and in the same line as the direction of the pattern, a bird facing to r. but regardant.

Supporting and surrounding the figure is a cloud scroll of tree-coral type. Between the vertical repeat of the cloud dividing the sprite from the bird is an S-shaped stem that terminates at each end in a large leaf. On a vertical line

passing close to the tail of the bird the pattern is reversed, thus giving a pair of adorsed birds and a pair of confronting sprites. The intersection and reversal of the cloud scroll result in a form resembling a rococo cartouche. Attached to the upper edge of the fragment is a small piece of another pattern inverted, showing the head of an animal.

The dark part of the drawing is from the actual fragment, the lighter part being conjectural but, I think, inevitable.

The chief interest in this piece is the revelation of the manner in which the bi-symmetrical pattern is produced. There was no necessity to make a special design; one of the continuous tree-coral cloud scroll patterns was used. After weaving from the R. as far as the end of the bird the order of the stitches thence was reversed, resulting necessarily in the reversal of the pattern and the fusing of the bisected cloud to the reversed repetition of itself.

Two other points are of interest. The bird stands the same way up as the sprite, whereas in Figs. 2 and 3 the birds are at right angles to the line of pattern. The S-shaped curve is not joined to the cloud and does not seem to belong to the pattern. May it not be that in evolving a new system of treating design, the bird, which was originally turned at right angles in approximately the space it now occupies, was put right side up and the unattached S scroll added to improve the balance of the pattern?

Colour. Ground: dark blue. Pattern: crimson-brown, green and two tones of buff, or one pale pink and the other buff. Outlines, buff and crimson-brown. Cloud scroll banded longitudinally crimson-brown with green or pink.

Weave. Warp rib, moderately well woven. Green in bands and probably pink also.

Fig. 5. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk; pair of confronting griffins and enclosing ornament.* For description the pattern may conveniently be divided into three registers. The centre register is the largest on the fragment, and is composed of a pair of confronting regardant griffins, each with one forepaw raised against that of its fellow. The tails hang down and fuse, each to that of the griffin in the adjoining repeat. Between them is the upper part of a 'tree of life' with very stiff 'foliage' and no stem carried down.

Below, two large vermicular cloud scrolls arching over the heads of two very stylized grinning beasts with square eyes and ears. These beasts are rather unconvincing, but the supplementary sketch 5a gives a possible free rendering of one of them. Surrounding the whole and isolating it, is a stiff adaptation of tree-coral cloud scroll. Between the opposing outer curves of the upper part of enclosing

¹⁵ Cf. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, i. Fig. 40.

¹⁶ Cf. Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst*, p. 57, Fig. 72.

FRAGMENTS OF
POLYCHROME
FIGURED SILKS,
HAN PERIOD



FIG. 7. SCROLLS WITH DUCK
Green, Lt. Buff, Dk. Buff.

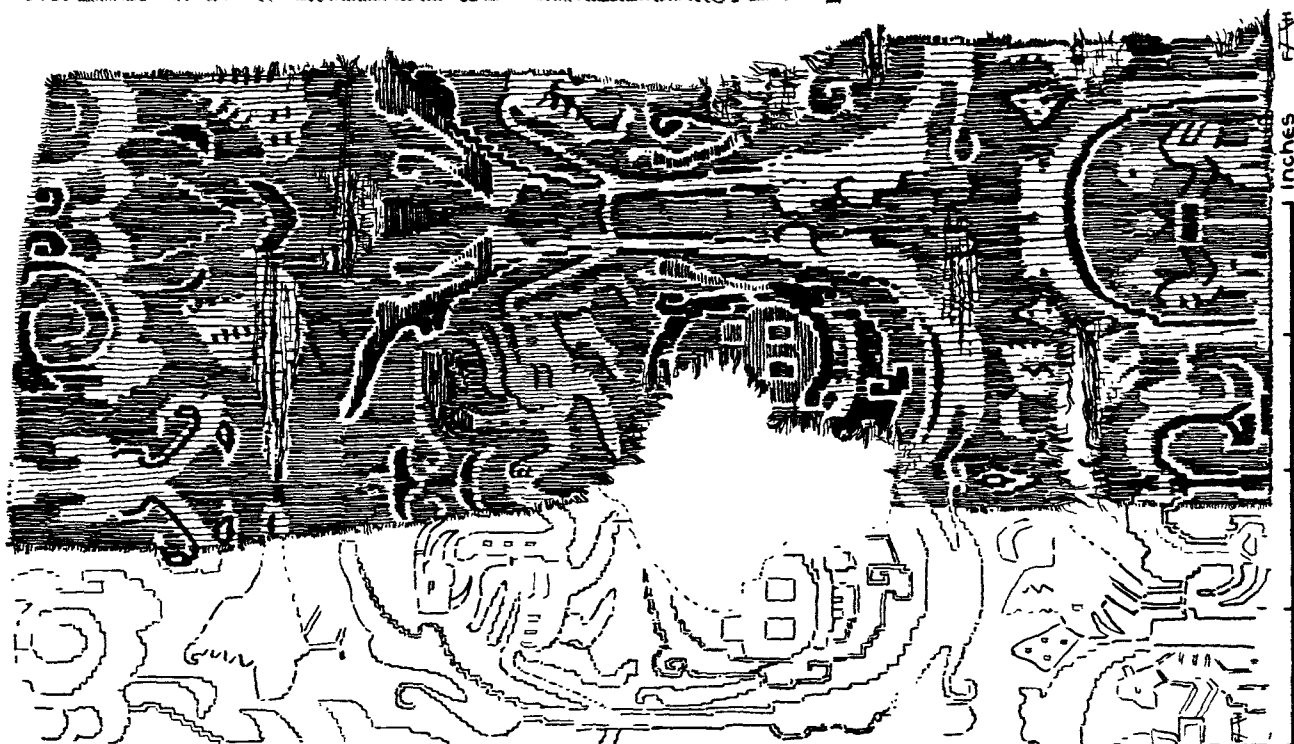


FIG. 5. PAIR OF CONFRONTING
GRIFFINS AND ENCLOSING ORNAMENT
Crimson Br. Blue, Green, Lt. Buff, Dk. Buff.

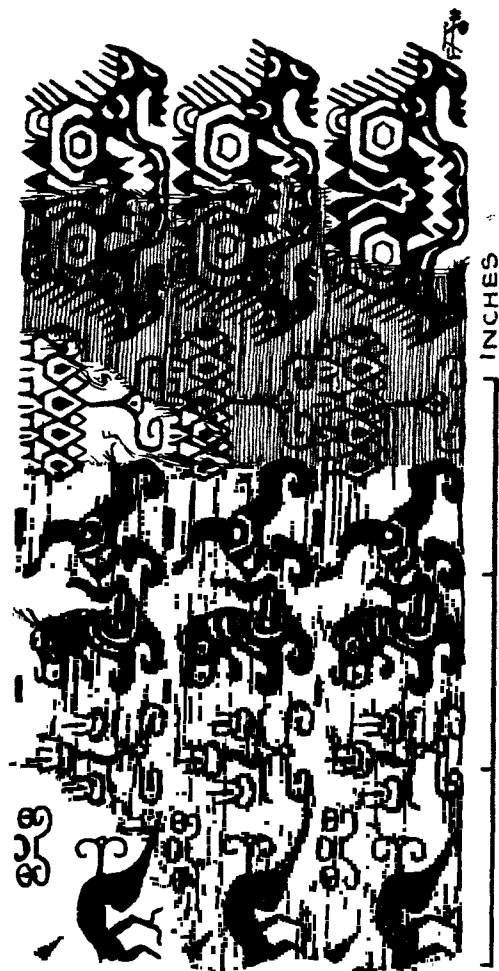


FIG. 8. CHINESE MONSTER AND TREES
Ground, dark yellow-brown.
Pattern, rich bronze green.

scrolls is a 'crescent' with the tip of a 'leaf' hanging straight below it.

In the upper register, immediately above the enclosing scrolls, is a pair of confronting geese, wings raised and necks stretched out, beaks touching. Behind each is a 'crescent' hanging by a single stem, which divides into two and joins the scrolls above. R. and l. of this divided stem is a leaf attached to the scroll. Above are fragments of cloud scrolls cut through and reversed.

In the bottom register, to r., is a semi-elliptical arched 'shrine' in which a pair of grotesque winged sheep or goats (?) kneels, one on either side of a rectilinear 'fire altar'. To l. of this is a smaller pair of 'arches', the centre pillar having a stepped capital, and the outer piers having each a scroll ornament at the bottom and two spurs projecting outwards. To l. the 'shrine' is repeated. In the spandrels between shrines and small arches is a pair of confronting geese (?) regardant with wings and spotted tails raised.

The whole design is a clumsy adaptation of fragments of three or possibly four different cloud scroll patterns, treated by the turnover method whereby exact bi-symmetrical schemes are obtained producing new and adventitious forms capable of misinterpretation and thereby suggesting development into logical and significant ones.

If the drawing be turned a quarter round so that the vertical becomes the horizontal line, and a piece of paper be placed over the outer half of the shrine and another over the l. arch of the small double arcade, a portion of cloud scroll will be isolated having the goose at right angles to the direction of the scroll. The smaller curve of the scroll shows a voluted node and two uncurled nodes (cf. Fig. 1); and half of the fire altar becomes the possible end of a curve of a cloud. The banding or ribbing, characteristic of the tree-coral scroll, is obvious.

If the same experiment be applied to the upper register a similar revelation will result, showing that the 'crescent' forms are accidental. The 'tree of life' is composed of fragments of leaves or scrolls not originally intended to produce this form at all. The centre register is probably composed of two different cloud-scroll patterns, which may be separated by a line carried across just below the feet of the griffins.

Colour. Ground: crimson-brown. Pattern: Light blue (faded to green-blue), green and two tones of buff. Outlines in one or other of these colours in contrast with colour of outlined part.

Weave: Warp rib, loosely woven. Green only occurs in bands, the other colours seeming to continue throughout.

Fig. 6. *Fragment of polychrome figured silk;*

chained grotesque beast with bell flowers. This is different in type from the foregoing. It is a relatively small pattern repeating horizontally as a 'half drop', that is to say, it is dropped half the height of the pattern each time it moves forward. It is composed of free, curved lines and rigid straight ones. One of the straight-lined forms is a lozenge-shaped scroll of one and a half turns. The first quarter turn is a straight band of even width issuing from a long rugged root and ornamented with a simple plaited pattern. The remaining turns are of the same width decorated with nebuly turn-overs. The outer angle on the long diagonal of the lozenge opposite the root has an outward step. At the eye of the scroll is a stalkless bell-flower with serrated edges.

The root, near its junction with the scroll, broadens into shoulders from which are growing two outward and downward curving stalks each carrying a bell flower, and two inner shorter stalks. Thrown across the root is a stem of semi-elliptical downward curve on the right end of which is a grotesque animal-like root with six downward curving spines arranged in a partial whirl and having the appearance of legs. On the other end is a trefoil 'nest' with branched spines projecting from above, and from below, an upward curving stem with basal bract, carrying at its extremity a curly seedpod, burst and revealing the seeds.

Between the repeats of this group is an eccentric and bewildering beast-like form composed of a cloud scroll, on which are recognisable three paws with three claws on each. From the body a second lozenge-shaped volute of one and a quarter turns hangs downwards. Three drooping stalks carrying bell flowers are thrown out from the region of the 'chest', and from the middle of the back of the beast stretches an arched jewelled chain which seems to be attached to a hind leg. The whole is a wonderfully ingenious pattern showing perfect mastery of the design of an all-over treatment.

The plaited pattern of the first lozenge volute recalls the repeating 'hearts' of the bands in a lozenge pattern from Antinoë of the sixth century,¹⁷ and more closely the guilloche on the N. face of the E. pillar of the Wu Liang-tzu tomb and the squared guilloche on bricks.¹⁸ The jewelled chain has a considerable interest, as it appears in precisely the same form in the Han tomb sculptures¹⁹ and frequently as a common chain in the 14th century Italian silks.

¹⁷ Cf. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, i. Fig. 46.

¹⁸ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. CIII, No. 198.

¹⁹ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. LXXIX, No. 150. M. Chavannes is doubtful about the genuineness of this sculpture, but believes that it was copied from an ancient original.

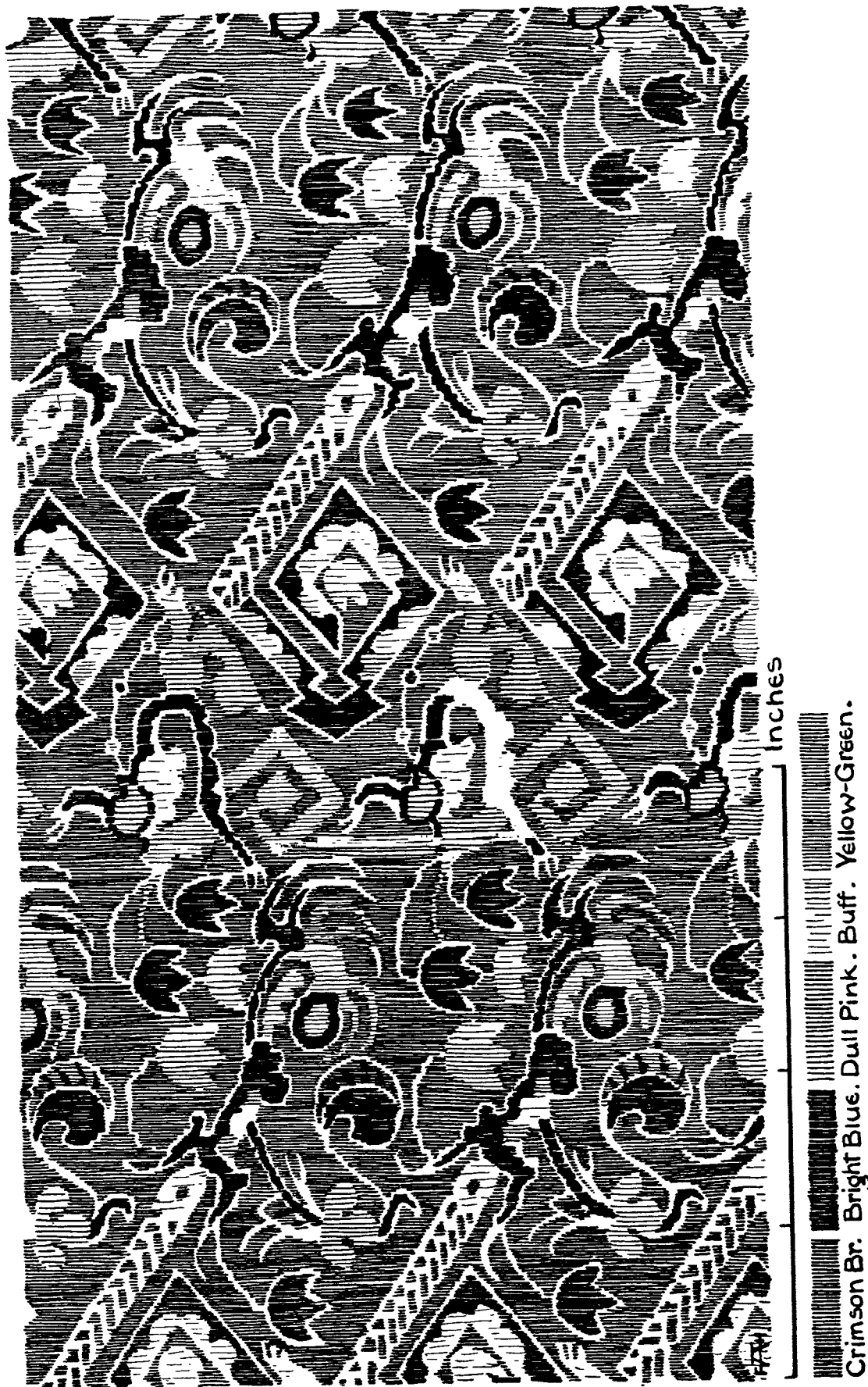


FIG. 6. CHAINED GROTESQUE BEAST WITH BELL FLOWERS

FRAGMENT OF POLYCHROME FIGURED SILK, HAN PERIOD

Colour. Ground: Rich crimson-brown. Pattern: Bright blue, dull pink, buff and yellow-green. Outlines, where used, buff. Blue, always outlined.

Weave: Warp rib, fairly woven. Green seems to be the colour occurring in bands, the other colours extending throughout the fabric.

Fig. 7. Fragment of polychrome figured silk; scrolls with duck. This again is an entirely different type of pattern from any of the foregoing. The unit is relatively small, and consists of a thin scrolled stem with the drifting pronged feature as root. Its upper end terminates in a lily-like flower with outward curled calyx and solid centre. A similar lily springs from the outer side at upper l. bend, and between the two lilies is a wing-like scalloped leaf attached to the stem along one side and having a recurved point at each end. Within the curve of the outer scroll is a much smaller inner one of two revolutions springing from a modified pronged root which adapts itself to the form of the larger one. Two lilies sprout from the upper part of the smaller scroll, one on each side of a standing regardant duck closely resembling the bird in Fig. 4. From the bottom of scroll are two leaves or bracts arranged in a lily-like manner. This unit repeats vertically and horizontally; in the spandril between repeats is a Chinese seal character.

Colour. Ground: crimson-brown. Pattern: Buff and green, all very much faded.

Weave. Warp rib evenly but rather loosely woven; green in recurring bands.

The selvedge is in two bands. The outer band is plain, the inner divided into elongated hexagons, of which the adjoining triangular ends are differently coloured alternately; the ground behind them also is modified to give contrast.

Fig. 8. Fragment of silk fabric in two colours; Chinese monster and trees. To r. is the T'ao-t'ieh ogre characterised by its strong angular archaic drawing, recalling the art of the Pacific. The monster consists of a head with open grinning jaws furnished with sharp triangular teeth, large hexagonal eyes with semi-hexagonal eyebrows, flat nose, hair or coronet of four triangular points, bandy legs with turned-in feet and an upstanding fringe of straight quills extending from elbow to ear; ear small and semi-circular. The shoulders, legs and lower jaw are decorated with curved lines in the colour of the background. The ogre occupies the full height of the band of pattern.

To l. is a tree in outline. Its roots are two slightly flattened volutes turning under, their outer limbs running towards each other and fusing in an upward ogee curve, the elongated point of which forms the tree stem. Just below the point of fusion a looped line ties the curves

together, and in the hollow of the loop is a dot. The foliage is represented by a row of five elongated pentagons with one point downwards. From between the points, the corresponding points of a back row appear; and above, the upper parts of a third row. Each upper angle has a short vertical outer spine. Inside each pentagon is a pentagonal dot.

To l. of the tree is a winged lion, passant to l., with open mouth and small recurved line projecting above snout. A short wing slightly curved forward is indicated at the shoulder by simple lines. Curved stripes adorn the body, that on the quarter being semi-hexagonal with centre dot. The tail waves freely upwards.

In front of the lion is a second tree with roots like the first; but the stem branches into three, each bearing a fruit or flower resembling a medlar, with three vertical spines projecting upward from each. To l. of this tree is a dragon with slim body and legs, bifurcated foot and tail; head missing. Above the tail is a group of three fruits or flowers on a stem, horizontal under centre flower and curving downward and outwards and then into upward scrolls supporting the side flowers.

All the drawing is rich and flowing with the exception of the ogre. The whole pattern repeats vertically close together and has a rich effect.

Colour. Ground: dark yellow-brown. Pattern: rich bronze green. **Weave:** Fine warp rib.

Fig. 9. Fragment of silk fabric in two colours; Phoenix and Dragon. This piece was found by Sir Aurel Stein at a ruined watch-station of the Tun-huang *Limes* east of the Lop desert. It is shown here on account of the very early origin indicated for it by a Chinese document dated 98 B.C. which was found in the identical refuse heap (see above p. 4), and on account of its obvious connection in style with the preceding and the following (Fig. 10) pieces.

It is an all-over diaper on a geometrical plan. The scheme is a square diagonal formed of bars of cloud scroll with groups of four modified ogre heads forming a symmetrical boss at the crossings. The lozenges enclose two different patterns alternating diagonally. One pattern is a pair of dragons and a pair of flying phoenixes with a rosette composed of six small lozenges round a centre oblong. The other contains four birds in two pairs regardant, the opposite pairs being feet to feet, with a centre of trees (?).

The general silhouette treatment with the light markings to relieve the masses, such as those on the dragons, is recognizable as the same technique as that of Fig. 8. The rosette of triangles in the phoenix square recalls the pentagonal treatment of the tree foliage in the same specimen, and more closely the 'tree' in the damask



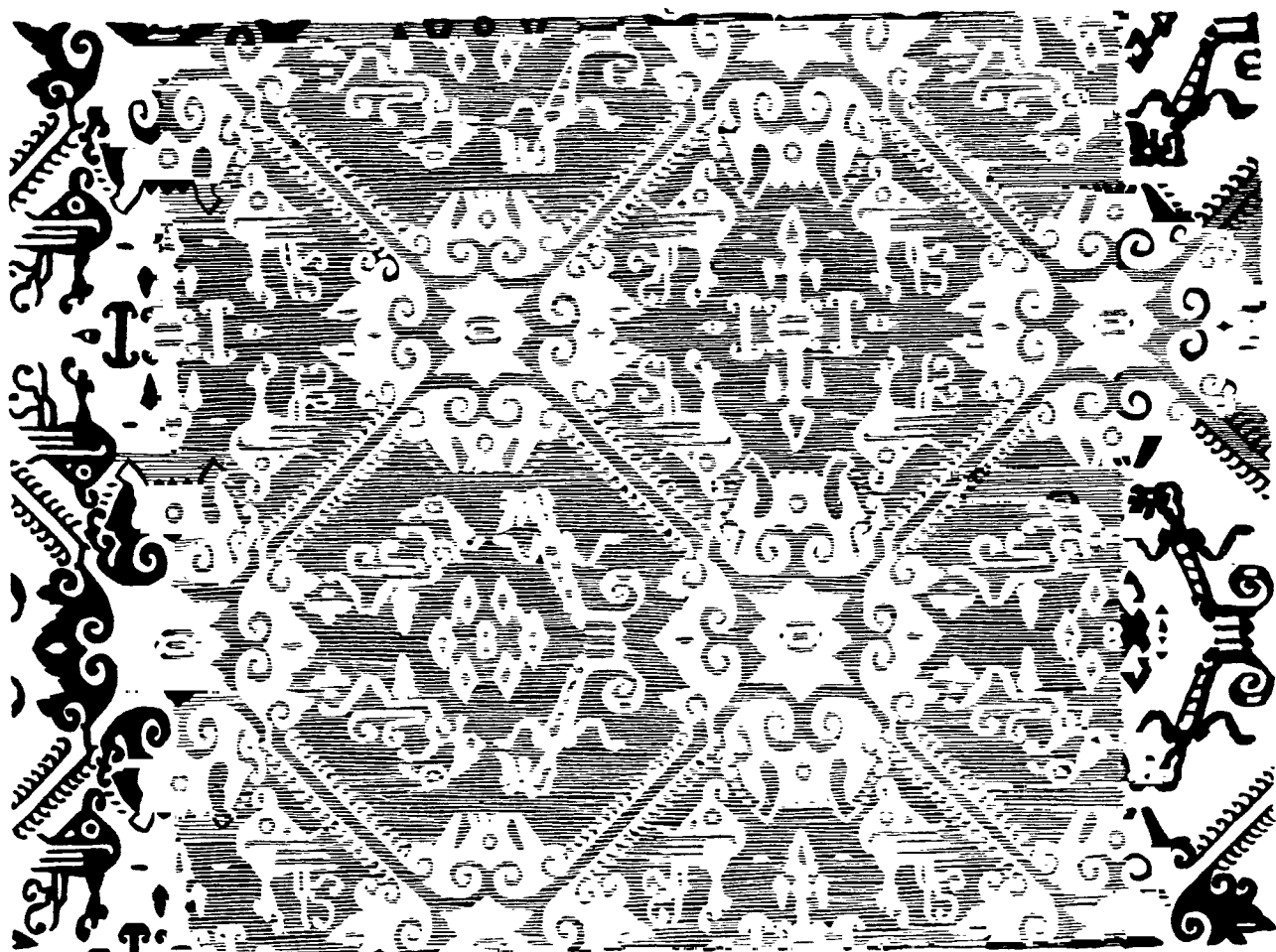
White on Maroon

FIG. 10

FRAGMENTS OF SILK
FABRICS IN TWO
COLOURS, HAN PERIOD

FIG. 9. PHENIX AND DRAGON

FIG. 10. PHENIX AND GRIFFIN



Indigo Blue on low-toned Greenish Gold

FIG. 9

(Scale 1/1)

Fig. 13. This early example of a geometrical all-over pattern affords striking evidence of the correctness of Professor Strzygowski's Far Eastern derivation of such motifs.

The phoenix in its extravagantly stylized form, but more angular, and associated with the dragon in a geometrical frame with cloud scroll border, occurs again much later in a specimen of 'archaic' carpet attributed to the 13th—14th centuries.²⁰

Colour. Ground: Yellow-green. *Pattern:* Indigo. *Weave:* Warp rib.

10. *Fragment of silk fabric in two colours; Phoenix and Griffin.* This fragment, recovered by Sir Aurel Stein from the walled-up chapel of the 'Thousand Buddhas Caves' near Tun-huang (see above p. 1), is shown by its pattern and weave to be of an earlier date than the mass of the figured fabrics, etc., found in the same great hoard and belonging to T'ang times. These fabrics have been described and illustrated in the final publication on Sir Aurel Stein's second expedition.²¹ But on account of its affinity with the two previously described examples this particular fragment is reproduced here. It is an all-over pattern designed in two planes. The scheme of the upper plane is a double cloud meander of regular long and short curves, the long curve forming a flat elliptical arch which rests upon fretted pilasters placed beneath the short curve. The pilasters rest upon grotesque horned and tusked heads which form the keystones to the arches below. The arcading is therefore arranged in imbricated order.

Through the arcading appears the lower plane, which is an all-over ogee diaper formed by a plain narrow band or stem, the vertical sides of the ogee occurring in the centre of each arch of the upper plane. In the centre of the vertical side of the ogee is a reef knot suggesting that upper and lower ogees are separate and linked by the knot.

The vertical divides above the small hollow of the meander, and in the spandril contained within the diverging lines and the hollow of the meander is an inverted palmette with its two outer limbs springing from the opposite diverging stems. Facing each other r. and l. of the vertical stem are two pairs of grotesque beasts, which are different in diagonally alternate arches. In one is a pair of phoenixes below and a pair of griffins above. The bodies of the griffins curve upwards and join the lower edge of the enclosing arch. The alternate pattern is a pair of leopards below and the same griffins above. The drawing throughout is very masterly and the general effect extremely rich.

²⁰ Cf. Migeon, *L'art musulman*, p. 428.

²¹ See Stein, *Serindia*, ii. pp. 911 sq., 963.

This example on purely archæological evidence cannot be more definitely dated than that it is earlier than the 10th century A.D., soon after the end of which the place of deposit was walled up. But there is another fragment of the same type which can be confidently assigned to the first century *before* Christ. It was excavated by Sir Aurel Stein at a watch-station of the ancient 'Great Wall' west of Tun-huang among the contents of a refuse heap, which is proved by a number of exactly dated Chinese records to have accumulated during the 1st century B.C. This piece, marked T.XV.a.iii.0010, is described and reproduced in Sir Aurel Stein's detailed publication.^{22a} It has the meandering cloud scroll of the same variety as that in Fig. 10, but on a larger scale and with equal undulations, and is definitely 'stepped.' From the hollow of the meander rises a pilaster or column composed of four straight lines. The weave is the same as that of the Lou-lan specimens. These details, which are all that is recognizable owing to the perished condition of the specimen, are sufficient to show that it is a variety of the pattern of Fig. 10.

The comparison of the voluted cloud scrolls of the three examples T.XV.a.iii.0010, Fig. 9 and Fig. 10, is instructive. In the first they are larger and of a clear S shape repeated, and are placed over a plain band. In Fig. 10 the plain band is present and the junctions of the S forms are slightly thickened. In Fig. 9 the plain band is straightened to form the lozenge and the cloud scrolls are reduced to small hook shapes, which are placed on both sides of the band.

The phoenix in Fig. 10 is found in this almost identical form in the Han tomb sculptures²², in textiles at Nara and in the Horiushi Temple²³, and again on the end of the ivory casket at Troyes.²⁴ The reef knot joining two stems occurs in a limestone Coptic carving in the Cairo Museum, attributed to the 7th—8th century.²⁵ The arrangement of two unconnected pairs of animals one above the other in the same compartment is unusual, but a good example is that of the 'Second' shroud of St. Potentien at Sens.²⁶ The palmette below the animals suggests the foliate base commonly used in 'Sassanian' animal patterns.

The low elliptical arch of the arcading resembles those of the Buddhist caves of Yün-kang (5th century A.D.). In fact, in the series

^{22a} See *Serindia*, ii. p. 783; Pl. LV.

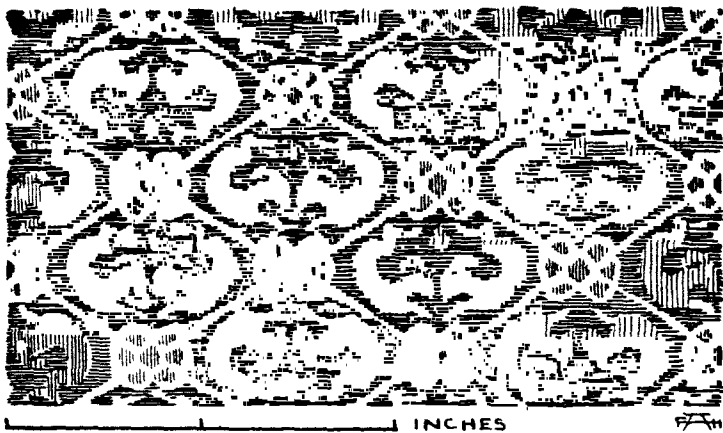
²² Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, i. Pl. C, No. 191.

²³ Cf. Falke, *Kunstgeschichte der Seidenweberei*, i. Figs. 112 and 118, respectively.

²⁴ Cf. Dalton, *Byzantine Art*, p. 707.

²⁵ Cf. Strzygowski, *Koptische Kunst*, p. 108.

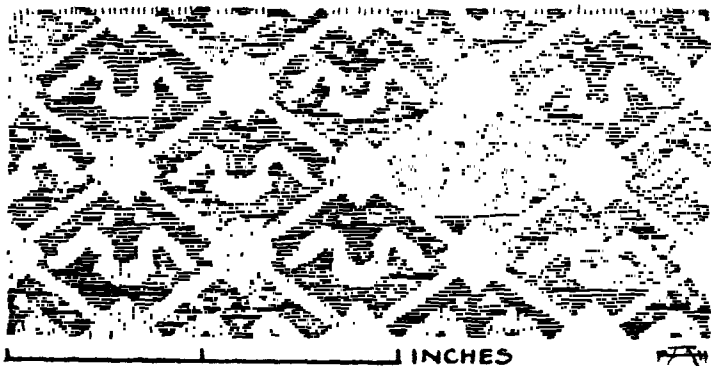
²⁶ Cf. Chartraine, *Les tissus anciens du trésor de la Cathédrale de Sens*, No. 42.



Ground, dull green.
Pattern, two tones of buff.



FIG. 11. CONFRONTING RAMS IN LOZENGE DIAPER



Ground, dull green.
Pattern, buff.

FIG. 12. LOZENGE DIAPER DEVELOPED FROM FIG. 11

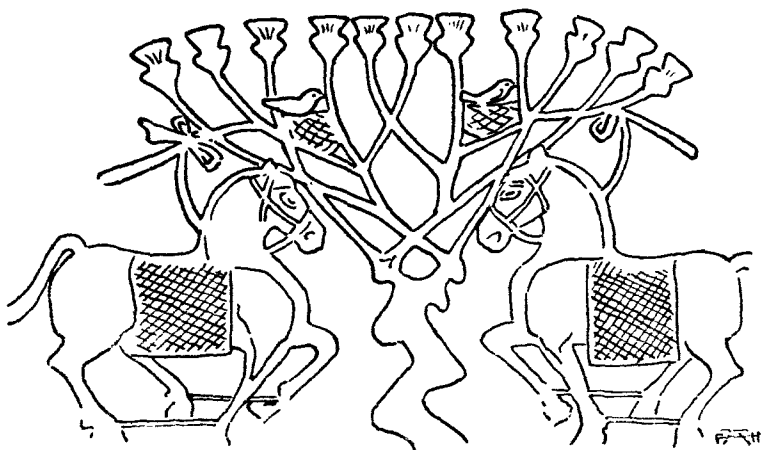
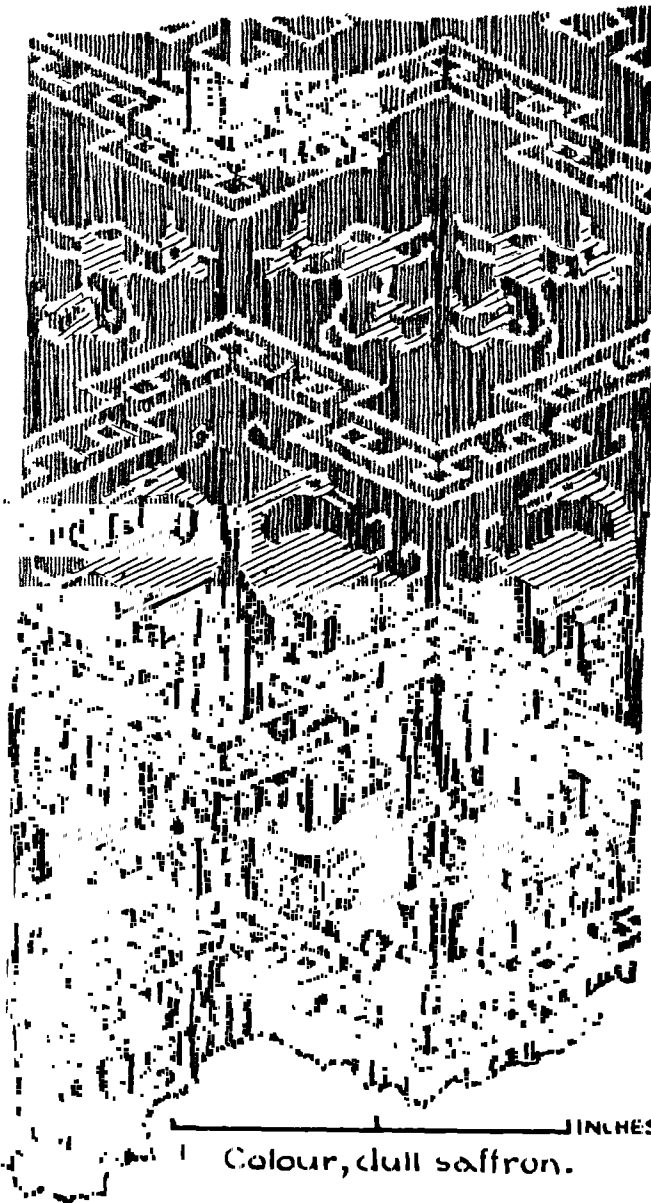
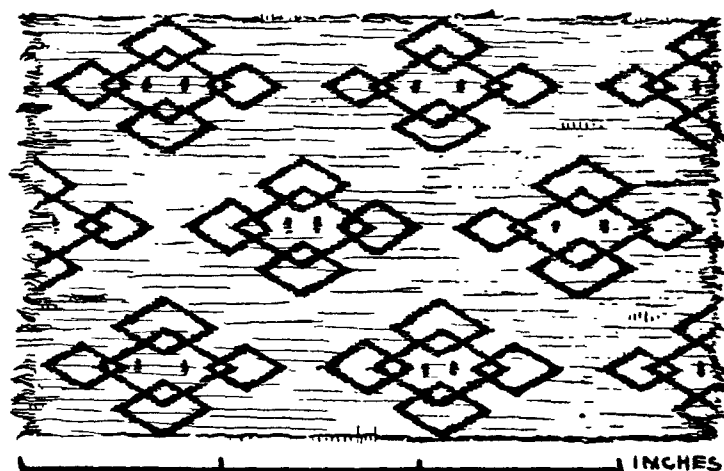


FIG. 16. SKETCH OF CONFRONTING HORSES FROM HAN
TOMB SCULPTURE



Colour, dull saffron.

FIG. 13. FRAGMENT OF SILK DAMASK, BIRDS AND
BEASTS



Ground, golden yellow.
Pattern, blue.

FIG. 14. LOZENGE PATTERN IN OUTLINE

FRAGMENTS OF SILK FIGURED FABRICS, HAN PERIOD

of niches cut in the walls of Cave G is found the same disposition of arch piers resting on the crowns of the arches of the lower series.²⁷

Colour. Ground: Maroon. Pattern: Silvery-white. *Weave.* Warp rib.

Fig. 11. *Fragment of figured silk fabric in three colours. Confronting rams in lozenge diaper.* An example of an all-over pattern on a geometrical plan. The pattern is a lozenge formed by thin lines crossing at angles of about 60°, with a rosette (or reef knot) at the crossings. Within each lozenge is a pair of confronting rams, their bodies curved upwards to fit the shape of the space. Above the heads is a spot. In a vertical direction the pattern reverses at each repeat. The sketch 11a is from a Han tomb sculpture.²⁸

Colour. Ground: faded green. Pattern: yellow green (?) and buff, all faded; lozenges and knots outlined buff; rams and space within knots, probably yellow-green.

Weave. Warp rib, finely woven.

Fig. 12. *Fragment of figured silk fabric in three (?) colours.* This is clearly a development of the previous patterns, in which all detail is lost, in a simpler treatment.

Colour and weave as above.

Fig. 13. *Fragment of silk damask; birds and beasts.* Zigzag bands, ornamented with a simple fret, break up the surface into lozenges of which the ends are open and confluent. Each limb of the lozenge has a 'fault' at its centre which displaces the band half its width. This is a common device of the Chinese to add richness and interest to a line, and probably derives from the interlacing of small lozenges at the angles of larger ones (see below Fig. 14). In the fragment five bands of lozenges appear, of which the outer two are incomplete.

The centre band has in each lozenge a pair of birds confronting and regardant. From the head of each a long plume extends backwards and terminates in an upward scroll. Two scrolled plumes represent the tail.

In the band below are pairs of winged and horned beasts with upward S-shaped tails and long snouts. They are placed with their feet against the short diagonal of the lozenge, so that they are at right angles to the line of birds, and are feet to feet.

In the band above are pairs of dog-like animals similarly placed. The body of the dog is piebald with round spots on neck and flank or quarter. The incomplete band below shows a group of vertical lines in the centre, with radiating curved lines to 1. The top band shows

three lozenge shapes—one at the base of a vertical centre stem and one on each side of the stem, probably a tree (cf. centre of Phoenix and Dragon pattern, Fig. 9).

Colour, discoloured to dull saffron. *Weave.* Warp rib, finely woven; the pattern shown in long floats and ground in short floats.

Fig. 14. *Fragment of silk fabric in two colours; lozenge in outline.* This is an example of an all-over geometrical pattern composed of lozenges in horizontal rows, each successive row being moved half a diameter to one side, causing the space between rows to follow a zigzag course. At each angle of the lozenge is interlaced a small lozenge, and in the field of each large lozenge are two spots. The sides of the lozenge meet at approximately 60° at their acute ends.

Colouring. Lozenges in blue outline on rich golden-yellow ground. *Weave.* Warp rib.

Fig. 15. *Fragment of silk tapestry; horse-legged birds and scrolls.* The strip is divided longitudinally into seven bands, of which the centre is the broadest. The subject of the centre band is a bird rising from a nest between a pair of confronting horse-legged birds. This is repeated, but with an interval in which is a symmetrical scroll pattern.

The nest is composed of a sort of simple inverted calyx with a narrow downward curving leaf added on each side. From the calyx a rather stiff scroll springs abruptly out at each side, ending in a volute. From between these rise two graceful upward curving scrolls reaching to the top of the band. There they curl over into volutes after throwing out a branch each, which scrolls in the reverse direction. Between the second pair of scrolls is the upper part of a bird facing r., small beak slightly open. A line round the neck marks a change of colour.

The confronting birds placed one on each side of the nest are of the same type but show a long streaming poll feather. The wings are raised as in flight, with feathers distended, and the body, supported on a cloud, terminates in a solid upward curving ribbed tail recalling that of a scorpion. In front are the forelegs of a horse in galloping pose. Below is a square dot, placed there to furnish an empty space.

The symmetrical scrolled design is formed by a volute springing from close to the edge of band and throwing out a branch from its upper outer side which curves down to the edge of band and finishes in a second volute. This is reversed to repeat horizontally, and the two are reversed vertically, forming a bi-symmetrical design in both directions. A short straight tie binds the reversed pairs together horizontally, and in the centre is placed a square dot. Between the opposing secondary volutes is a narrow pointed leaf. These secondary volutes necessarily form

²⁷ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. CLX, No. 277.

²⁸ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. XCIV. No. 177.

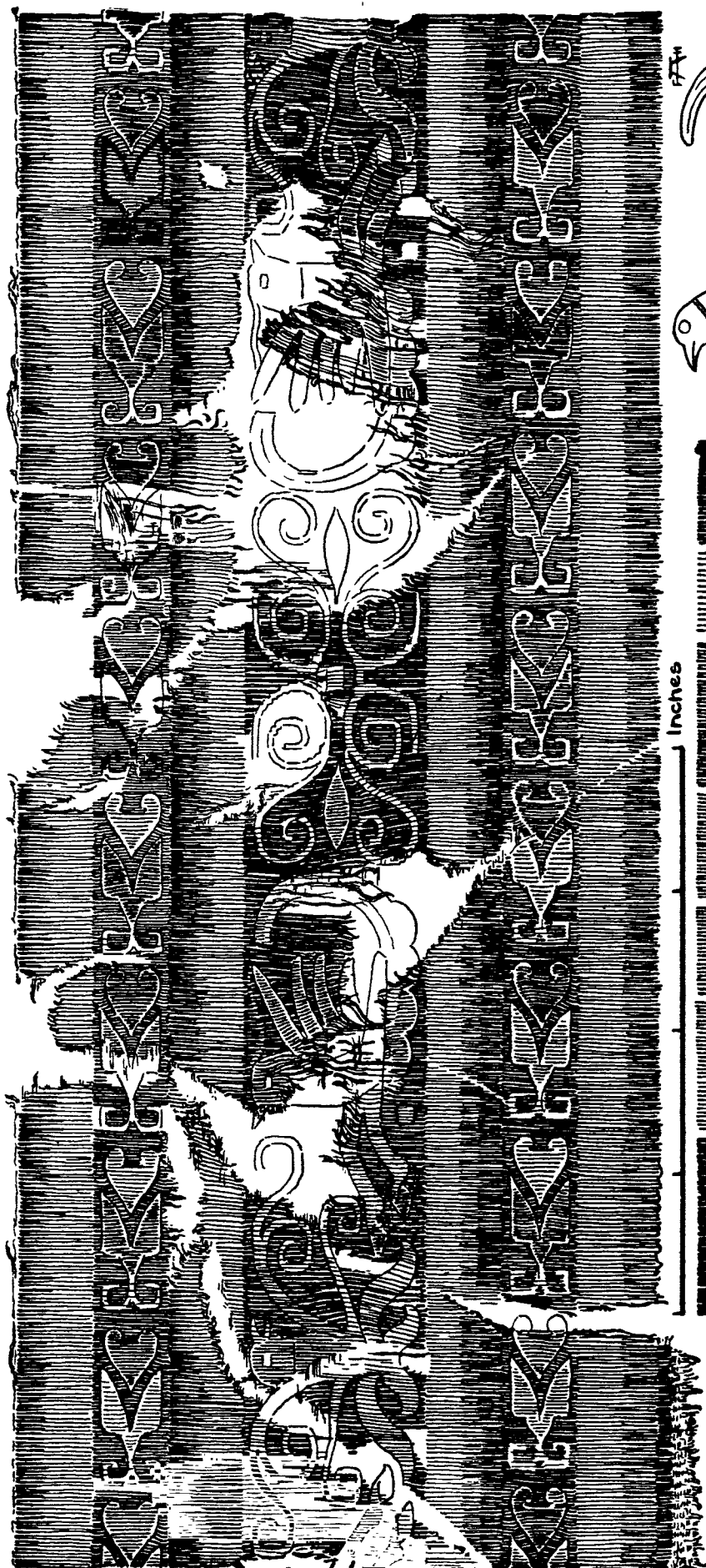


FIG. 15. HORSE-LEGGED BIRDS AND SCROLLS

Dk. Purple Br. Lt. Green. Green. Lt. Blue. Lt. Brown. Buff. Crimson.

Inches



FIG. 15a. HORSE-SHAPED BIRD FROM HAN TOMB SCULPTURE

FRAGMENT OF SILK TAPESTRY, HAN PERIOD

a heart-shape with point in between the primary volutes.

Above and below the central band is a group of three narrower bands of which the centre is patterned with a device repeating with changes of colour. The centre line of the pattern is horizontal; the pattern is a pair of shear-shaped leaves with a pair of outward curling volutes at their base, and a heart-shaped flower or solid palmette placed between the diverging leaves. The other bands are treated in 'rainbow' shading.

The horse-legged bird, which is not precisely a hippogryph, is probably here found on a textile for the first time. Reference to Fig. 15a copied from the Han tomb sculptures²⁹ indicates a common origin for both, and its complete absence in any Western pattern of whatever material hitherto discovered justifies the assumption of a Far-Eastern derivation. The pattern of the borders, on the other hand, with the heart-shaped 'palmette' is familiar enough in many modifications, from Coptic, Byzantine, and Syrian textiles, dating from the 6th century onwards. The latest possible date for our example is the 3rd century A.D.

The rainbow treatment of borders is familiar in the Byzantine Mosaics and in European illuminated manuscripts, all of later date than this tapestry.

Colour. Ground of central band: dark purple brown. Pattern: Crimson, green, light green, light blue, light brown and buff. The changes are rung on these colours in the repeats. For instance, one bird has a crimson head, green body, brown wings, brown legs and green hooves, and cloud shaded from brown through buff to light green; while another has a light blue head, crimson body, green wings, buff legs and green cloud and partial outline in light buff.

Ground of patterned borders: crimson. Pattern: in the same colours as central band, interchanging in the repeats. Inner rainbow bands, buff through crimson to blue; outer bands buff to green.

Weave: Strongly ribbed and woven in the manner of Coptic tapestry. The divisions between colours, when occurring parallel to the warp are sometimes joined by carrying a few threads of each colour across the opening. Small divisions are left open.

∴ ∴

Character of the designs. The textiles illustrating these notes have been selected from the Lou-lan collection as exemplifying the most interesting phases of the silk weavers' art of the

early period to which they belong. They are all figured fabrics and include, as has been seen, polychrome, bichrome, and monochrome examples.

Animals and birds, with occasional figures, form the main interest in most of the designs, and these are surrounded and supported by clouds or ornament derived from clouds or by floral scrolls. The forms of the scrolls are very free and unexpected and, as a rule, unlike any of the rigid geometrical scrolls forming the basis of Greek, Roman and Mesopotamian ornament. The palmette is absent (excepting in the tapestry fragment Fig. 15 and Fig. 10). None of the patterns can be classed as hunting motifs; for in the single example in which a horseman appears he is not hunting but riding quietly, apparently unarmed.

The designs are, without exception, of the nature of 'all-over' patterns, that is to say, they are not 'spots', nor is there a single example of the 'spot' type of pattern in the whole Lou-lan collection. The nearest approach to a spot is Fig. 14, and that is designed to give a zigzag all-over effect by the linking up of the patterns of the background.

The schemes of design are:—Continuous single design right across the fabric (Fig. 2); pattern repeating side by side with the effect of a continuous design (Fig. 1); the same principle but with a definite break between repeats (Fig. 7), which however is a very delicate pattern and has the character of an all-over cloud-scroll; the side by side repeat but on the zigzag plan or "half drop" (Fig. 6); the turn-over type (Figs. 4 and 5) and the geometrical lozenge (Figs. 9, 11, 12, 13 and 14).

The Cloud-Scroll. Among the earliest forms of Chinese cloud-scroll are those of the Han tomb sculptures in Shantung. Of these scrolls there are at least four well marked variations. The first is a rolling cloud frequently terminating in the head of a bird, dragon or genius such as appear in the pictures of the 'Aerial Abode of the Taoist Divinities'.³⁰ The second is seen in Fig. 2a, where the curves of the cloud are controlled into regular repetition and the voluted nodes are formalized. The third form (Fig. 2b) is turned into a more circular scroll with zoomorphic ends, and cinctures round the band. The fourth (Fig. 2c) is elliptical, interlacing, and its nodes are in reversed pairs.

In the textiles three general types will be distinguished. In Fig. 2, the 'vermicular', we have the nearest approach to the second and third scroll forms of the sculptures; the band is of approximately even thickness, and the nodes are voluted. In Fig. 1 is found a new type,

²⁹ Cf. Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. LXX. No. 134.

³⁰ Cf. Bushell, *Chinese Art*, i. p. 32, Fig. 17; and Chavannes, *Mission archéologique*, I, Pl. LXX.

'tree-coral', which branches and assumes fleshly foliate forms, sometimes throwing out real leaves and buds. The third type is that in which the connecting band is either omitted or placed on one side, bringing the voluted nodes close together and sometimes overlapping. (Figs. 9 and 10).

A border from painted decoration at the caves of Kizil, near Kuchā³¹ in Chinese Turkestan, shows a cloud scroll still further developed, but with the unmistakable nodes and supplementary clouds; from a temple of Bezeklik in Turfān we have another cloud border with clusters of three volutes as in 2a. Whether the scroll and beasts of the Coptic stone carvings³² so strikingly similar in scheme to our Fig. 4 owe any of their inspiration to the Chinese more masterly designs can only be decided after further investigation.

In describing Figs. 1 and 4 attention has been drawn to the curiously rococo forms in the cloud-scrolls. The indebtedness of the rococo to Chinese influence must be admitted, and it would be interesting if its forms could be traced back to so early an origin as these Han silks.

The beasts and birds. The designers of the early textiles had a keen appreciation of the feline form in action. In fact it is this faculty for enjoyment of movement in nature and the power of expressing it graphically that gives the vivacious quality and exquisite balance to early Chinese decorative Art. No. 2 is a fine example of this quality; one feels that the whole scheme is flowing or drifting from right to left, a movement expressed not merely in the graceful action of the animals, but also in every line of the scrolls. Each beast has individuality and is a delightful study.

It has been noted in describing the specimens that when birds are introduced in a design with animals the former are turned at right angles to the latter. This is not invariable, but is so frequent that it would appear to be directed by the observance of some well understood convention.

The arrangement of confronting animals and birds is common in Han times. In sketch Fig. 16, taken from a Han tomb sculpture, is shown a tree between two hobbled and tethered horses. It will be noticed that although the horses are exactly alike the tree is not entirely bi-symmetrical. It is instructive to compare the ungainly creatures and petrified 'trees' of the majority of 'Sassanian' and Coptic silks with the living and breathing designs of these early Chinese examples.

The Weaving. The weave in all the Lou-lan figured silks is a variation of that technically known as 'warp rib'. It may be briefly de-

scribed as giving a ribbed appearance running across the fabric, due to the number of threads in the warp being greater per inch than that in the weft, and to a particular order of interweaving which is too technical to detail here, but which the diagram of the face of the cloth, greatly enlarged (Fig. 17), may sufficiently explain. The 'figure' or pattern is formed by the warp threads and presents a kind of dull satin surface, faintly ribbed.

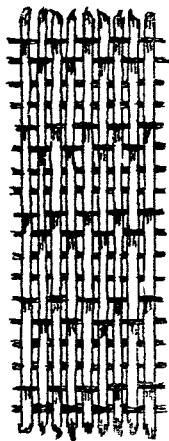


FIG. 17.

Those pieces which are not from Lou-lan but are included in these notes because of their affinity of pattern, are of the same weave. They are: Fig. 9 from the Tun-huang Limes, found together with a Chinese document of 98 B.C.; T. XV.a. iii.0010. also from the Tun-huang Limes and referred to in the description of Fig. 10, dating from the 1st century B.C.; and Fig. 10 from the 'Thousand Buddhas' of Tun-huang, shown by weaving and design to be earlier than the mass of figured fabrics, silk paintings, etc., from the same site belonging to the T'ang period.

All the known Coptic, Sassanian and Byzantine figured silks are, I believe, woven in a twill weave.

The twill does not appear, so far as my investigation has shown, in any of the Lou-lan silks, though it is plentifully represented among the figured fabrics from the 'Caves of the Thousand Buddhas', belonging in the main to the T'ang period. It would hence seem reasonable to assume that this method of weaving was unknown to the Chinese at the time the Lou-lan silks were woven. If there were any Near-Eastern silks woven in twill as early as the 2nd century A.D., it is very unlikely that the Chinese weavers could ever have seen them, or they would have imitated so useful a weave; and equally if they had no access to such early Western fabrics, they could not have imitated Western silk patterns. It has, however, yet to be discovered when and where the twill weave originated.

The 'turn-over' device. In some of the examples of small patterns such as Figs. 11, 12 and 13 the turnover is used, presumably because the pattern was of no great importance, being indeterminate at a short distance and intended merely to break up and enrich the surface in the most economical way. When animals occur in such designs, the turnover, if horizontal, results in pairs, confronting or adorsed; and if vertical, in their being feet to feet or head to head.

But in two of the examples, Figs. 4 and 5, the patterns are of greater importance, and yet the

³¹ Cf. Grünwedel, *Altbuddhistische Kultstätten*, pp. 146 and 262, Figs. 335 and 542.

³² Cf. Strzykowski, *Koptische Kunst*, p. 57, Fig. 72.

turnover method has been used. The result cannot be considered successful in these patterns and could not have satisfied the critical standard of taste which approved of Figs. 1 and 2. It has already been pointed out that the patterns of Figs. 4 and 5 are composed of fragments of designs, turned over carelessly, leaving to chance the forms that might result from the reversed duplication of truncated portions of the original.

The result in Fig. 5 is the fusing of the tails and raised paws of the large griffin, the floating meaningless crescent forms, the unintentional similitude of a fire altar worshipped by sheep or goats (!), and the arcading that adjoins. It suggests a contemptuous indifference on the part of the weaver for the effect of a method against which his artistic nature revolts. This view is strengthened by the generally careless weaving of the piece. In No. 4 the original pattern selected for mutilation is less important and the result therefore less displeasing. May not these pieces be the outcome of a method adopted for the production of silks for export?

China has always shown herself ready to meet the requirements of foreign patrons of her arts; and if Western people with ideas of art based on Hellenistic precision and limitations were confused by those subtle all-over patterns of rolling clouds, scrolls, and virile beasts, the Chinese would certainly have humoured a request for something more circumscribed such as the embroidered or tapestry-woven discs and bands which it had been customary in the West to apply to garments as spots. And in this perhaps lies an explanation of the confronting beasts, repeated *ad nauseam*, neatly framed in pearl borders to isolate the stiff mechanical scheme, and to bring it within the cramped art perception of the Byzantine amateur.

Such clumsily turned over patterns as Figs. 4 and 5 inevitably produce unexpected forms which may be suggestive of new developments. Certainly the arcading at the bottom of Fig. 5, with its fire altar and sheep, is accidental. Equally so is the rococo detail formed in Fig. 4. But such forms once seen give rise to new ideas and endless possibilities.

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